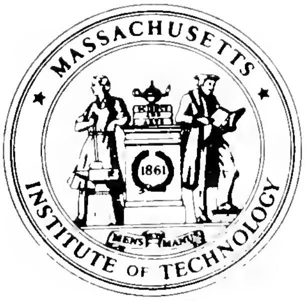
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THE INDIVIDUAL, THE ORGANIZATION, AND THE CAREER: A CONCEPTUAL SCHEME*

Edgar H. Schein

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May, 1968

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present a conceptual scheme and a set of variables which make possible the description and analysis of an individual's movement through an organization. We usually think of this set of events in terms of the word "career," but we do not have readily available concepts for describing the multitude of separate experiences and adventures which the individual encounters during the life of his organizational career. We also need concepts which can articulate the relationship between 1) the career seen as a set of attributes and experiences of the _individual_ who joins, moves through, and finally leaves an organization, and 2) the career as defined by the _organization_--a set of expectations held by individuals inside the organization which guide their decisions about whom to move, when, how, and at what "speed." It is in the different perspectives which are held toward careers by those who act them out and those who make decisions about them, that one may find some of the richest data for understanding the relationship between individuals and organizations.

The ensuing discussion will focus first on structural variables, those features of the organization, the individual, and the career which are the more or less stable elements. Then we will consider a number of "process" variables

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[*] The ideas in this paper derive from research conducted from 1958-1964 with funds from the Office of Naval Research, Contract NONR 1841 (83) and subsequently with funds from the Sloan Research Fund, M.I.T.

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which will attempt to describe the dynamic interplay between parts of the organization and parts of the individual in the context of his ongoing career. Basically there are two kinds of processes to consider: 1) the influence of the organization on the individual, which can be thought of as a type of acculturation or adult socialization; and 2) the influence of the individual on the organization, which can be thought of as a process of innovation (Schein, 1968).

Both socialization and innovation involve the relationship between the individual and the organization. They differ in that the former is initiated by the organization and reflects the relatively greater power of the social system to induce change in the individual, whereas the latter is initiated by the individual and reflects his power to change the social system. Ordinarily these two processes are discussed as if they were mutually exclusive of each other and as if they reflected properties of the organization or the individual. Thus certain organizations are alleged to produce conformity in virtually all of their members, while certain individuals are alleged to have personal strengths which make them innovators wherever they may find themselves. By using the concept of career as a process over time which embodies many different kinds of relationships between an organization and its members, I hope it can be shown that typically the same person is both influenced (socialized)and in turn influences (innovates), and that both processes coexist (though at different points in the life of a career) within any given organization.

I. THE STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Organizations such as industrial concerns, government agencies, schools, fraternities, hospitals, and military establishments which have a continuity beyond the individual careers of their members can be characterized structurally in many different ways. The particular conceptual model one chooses will depend on the purposes which the model is to fulfill. The structural model which I would like to propose for the analysis of careers is not intended to be a general organizational model; rather, it is designed to elucidate that side of the organization which involves the movement of people through it.

My basic proposition is that the organization should be conceived of as a three-dimensional space like a cone or cylinder in which the external vertical surface is essentially round and in which a core or inner center can be identified. What we traditionally draw as a pyramidal organization on organization charts should really be drawn as a cone in which the various boxes of the traditional chart would represent adjacent sectors of the cone but where movement would be possible within each sector toward or away from the center axis of the cone. Figure 1 shows a redrawing of a typical organization chart according to the present formulation.

Movement within the organization can then occur along three conceptually distinguishable dimensions:

a) Vertically--corresponding roughly to the notion of increasing or decreasing one's rank or level in the organization;

b) Radially--corresponding roughly to the notion of increasing or decreasing one's centrality in the organization, one's degree of being more or less "on the inside";

c) Circumferentially--corresponding roughly to the notion of changing one's function or one's division of the organization.

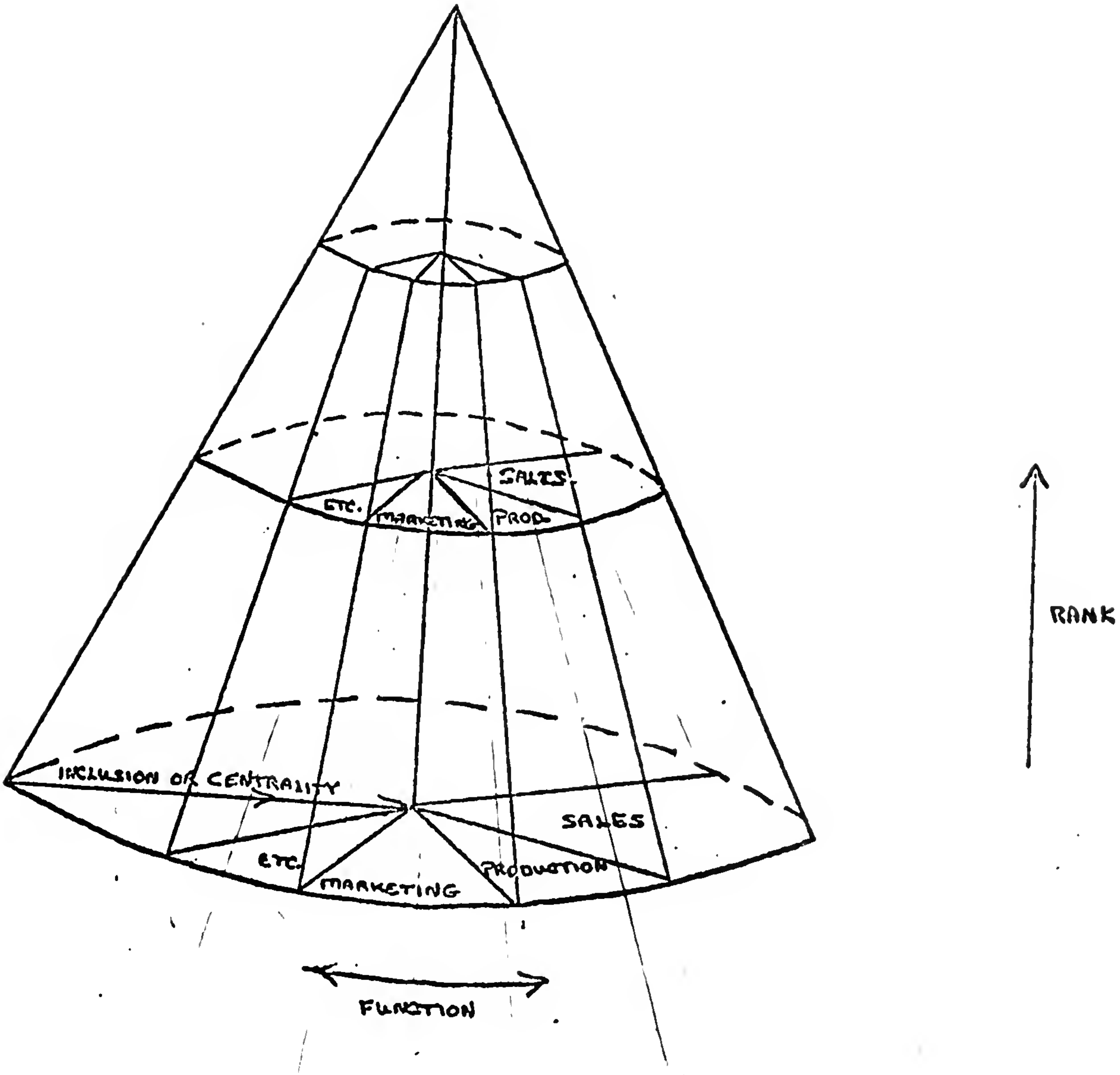
SALES
ETC.
MARKETING
PROD.
INCLUSION OR CENTRALITY
SALES
ETC.
MARKETING
PRODUCTION
FUNCTION
RANK

Figure 1. A Three Dimensional Model of an Organization

Whether movement along one of these dimensions is ever independent of movement along another one is basically an empirical matter. For present purposes it is enough to establish that it would be, in principle, possible for an individual to move along any one of the dimensions without changing his position on either of the other ones.

Corresponding to the three types of movement one can identify three types of boundaries which characterize the internal structure of the organization:

a) Hierarchical boundaries--which separate the hierarchical levels from each other;

b) Inclusion boundaries--which separate individuals or groups who differ in the degree of their centrality;*

c) Functional or departmental boundaries--which separate departments, divisions, or different functional groupings from each other.

Boundaries can vary in 1) number, 2) degree of permeability, and 3) type of filtering properties they possess. For example, in the military there are a great many functional boundaries separating the different line and staff activities, but the overall policy of rotation and keeping all officers highly flexible makes these boundaries highly permeable in the sense that people move a great deal from function to function. On the other hand, a university would also have many functional boundaries corresponding to the different academic departments, but these would be highly impermeable in the sense that no one would seriously consider the movement of an English professor to a Chemistry department, or vice versa. A small family-run business, to take a third example, is an organization with very few functional boundaries in that any manager performs all of the various functions.

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* The organization as a multi-layered system corresponds to Lewin's concept of the personality as a multi-layered system like an onion (Lewin, 1948).

Similarly, with respect to hierarchical or inclusion boundaries one can find examples of organizations in which there are many or few levels, many or few degrees of "being in," with the boundaries separating the levels or inner regions being more or less permeable. The external inclusion boundary is, of course, of particular significance, in that its permeability defines the ease or difficulty of initial entry into the organization. Those companies or schools which take in virtually anyone but keep only a small percentage of high performers can be described as having a highly permeable external inclusion boundary, but a relatively impermeable inclusion boundary fairly close to the exterior. On the other hand, the company or school which uses elaborate selection procedures to take in only very few candidates, expects those taken in to succeed, and supports them accordingly, can be described as having a relatively impermeable external inclusion boundary but no other impermeable boundaries close to the exterior.

Further refinement can be achieved in this model if one considered the particular types of filters which characterize different boundaries, i.e. which specify the process or set of rules by which one passes through the boundary. Thus hierarchical boundaries filter individuals in terms of attributes such as seniority, merit, personal characteristics, types of attitudes held, who is sponsoring them, and so on. Functional boundaries filter much more in terms of the specific competencies of the individual, or his "needs" for broader experience in some scheme of training and development (the latter would certainly not be considered in reference to a hierarchical boundary). Inclusion boundaries are probably the most difficult to characterize in terms of their filtering system in that the system may change as one gets closer to the inner core of the organization. Competence may be critical in permeating

the external boundary, but factors such as personality, seniority, and willingness to play a certain kind of political game may be critical in becoming a member of the "inner circle."* Filter properties may be formally stated requirements for admission or may be highly informal norms shared by the group to be entered.

With reference to individual careers, organizations can be analyzed and described on the basis of 1) number of boundaries of each type, 2) the boundary permeability of the different boundaries, and 3) the filtering system which characterizes them. For example, most universities have two hierarchical boundaries (between the ranks of assistant, associate, and full professor), two inclusion boundaries (for initial entry and tenure), and as many functional boundaries as there are departments and schools. Filters for promotion and tenure may or may not be the same depending on the university, but will generally involve some combination of scholarly or research publication, teaching ability, and "service" to the institution. Organizations like industrial ones which do not have a tenure system will be harder to diagnose as far as inclusion filters go, but the inclusion boundaries are just as much a part of their system. The variables identified thus far are basically intended as a set of categories in terms of which to describe and compare different types of organizations in respect to the career paths they generate.

A final variable which needs to be considered is the _shape_ of the three-dimensional space which characteristizes the organization. The traditional pyramidal organization would presumably become in this scheme a cone. An organization with very many levels could be thought of as a very steep cone, while one with few levels could be thought of as a flat cone. The drawing of the organization as a cone implies, however, that the highest level person is also the most

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* One of the best descriptions of such filters in an organization can be found in Dalton's (1959) discussion of career advancement in the companies to be studied.

central which is, of course, not necessarily the case. If the top of the organization is a management team, one might think of a truncated cone; if there is a powerful board of directors who represent a higher level but a wider range of centrality one might think of an inverted cone, the point of which touches the apex of the main cone and which sits on top of the main one. In universities where the number of full professors is as large as the number of assistant professors one might think of the organization more as a cylinder with a small cone on top of it representing the administration.

I am not stating any requirements that the shape of the organization be symmetrical. If a certain department is very large but very peripheral, it might best be thought of as a large bulge on an otherwise round shape. If one considers internal inclusion boundaries one may have some departments which are in their entirety very central and thus reach the vertical axis (core), while other departments do not contain anyone who is very central in the organization and thus do not reach the core at all. The shape of the inner core is also highly variable. It may be an inverted cone which would imply that the number of central people _increases_ with rank. Or it might be a cylinder which would imply that there are equal numbers of central people at all ranks. Or it might be some highly asymmetrical shape reflecting the reality that the number of central people varies with length of service, department, political connections with higher ranks, access to critical company informations, etc.*

Some Problems of Measuring Organizational Structure

The problem of measurement varies greatly as a function of the degree to which boundaries and their filtering characteristics are explicitly acknowledged

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*Dalton (1959) has identified what he calls "vertical cliques" which cover different ranks as well as departments of an industrial organization.

by a given organization and by the wider society. Thus, hierarchical boundaries which separate levels are a widely accepted fact of organizational life and the rules for permeating them tend to be fairly explicit. To the extent that implicit informal factors do operate it becomes more difficult to measure the filtering properties of the hierarchical boundaries in any given organization.

Functional boundaries are generally the easiest to identify because our typical analysis of organizations emphasizes different functions and departments. Similarly, the rules of entry to a function or department tend to be fairly explicit.

The inclusion boundaries are the hardest to identify and measure because to a considerable extent their very existence usually remains implicit. While it may be clear to everyone in a company that there is an inner circle (which may cut across many rank levels), this fact may be denied when an outsider probes for the data. The filtering mechanism may be even more difficult to identify because even the willing informant, including members of the inner circle, may be unclear about the actual mechanisms by which people move toward the center. Even the concept of centrality is unclear in that it does not discriminate between a) an individual person's feeling of being central or peripheral, and b) some objective criterion of his actual position in the organization's social structure.

In the discussion thus far I have meant by the term "centrality" the person's objective position as measured by the degree to which company secrets are entrusted to him, by ratings of others of his position, and by his power. His subjective rating of himself might correlate highly with these other measures and thus might prove to be a simpler measuring device, but it does not basically define centrality because a person may misperceive his own position.

It may be argued that I have over-stated the assumption that the organization is an integrated unified entity. It may after all be only a group of individual people or sub-groups coordinating their activities to some degree but operating from quite different premises. Therefore there are no "organizational" boundaries, only individual approaches to the movement and promotion of their subordinates.

There is ample evidence for the assertion that people who associate with each other around a common task for any length of time do develop group boundaries of various sorts and a set of norms which define their probability and filtering properties (e.g. Homans, 1950). But it is quite possible that several such groups co-exist within a larger social system and develop different norms. In applying the concepts which I am outlining in this paper it is therefore necessary to identify as the "organization" a group which has interacted for a sufficient length of time to have developed some common norms. Later, in analyzing the progress of a career, it will of course be necessary to consider the difficulties which are created for the individual as he moves from a group with one set of norms about boundaries to another group with a different set of norms about boundaries, even though both groups are part of the same larger organization.

II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Any given individual can be thought of as a more or less integrated set of social selves organized around a basic image or concept of self. His basic temperament, intellectual equipment, learned patterns of feeling expression, and psychological defenses underlie and partially determine this self-image and the kinds of social selves which the individual constructs for himself to deal with his environment. But our focus is on the constructed selves which make it possible for the individual to fulfill various role expectations in his environment, not on the more enduring underlying qualities.

I am using the concept of a constructed social self in the sense of Mead (1934) and more recently Becker (1961) and Goffman (1955,1957,1959), as a set of assumptions about, perceptions of, and claims on a given social situation in which role expectations may be more or less well defined. The basic rules of conduct and interaction in terms of which the person orients himself to any social situation are largely culturally determined, but these basic rules still leave each individual a wide latitude in how he will choose to present himself in any given situation (the "line" he will take), and how much social value or status he will claim for himself (his "face").

This conception of the individual places primary emphasis on those aspects of his total being which are the most immediate product of socialization, which most immediately engage other persons in daily life, and which are most dependent on the reinforcement or confirmation of others. For example, at a basic level, a person may be temperamentally easily frustrated, may have developed a character structure around the repression of strong aggressive impulses, and may rely heavily on denial and reaction-formation as defense mechanisms. These characteristics describe his basic underlying personality structure but they tell us practically nothing of how he presents himself to others, what his self-image is, how he takes characteristic occupational or social roles, how much value he places on himself, and what kind of interaction patterns he engages in with others.

Focusing on his constructed selves, on the other hand, might show us that this person presents himself to others as very even tempered and mild mannered, that in group situations he takes a role of harmonizing any incipient fights which develop between others, that he tries to appear as the logical voice of reason in discussions and is made uneasy by emotions, that he prefers to analyze problems and advise

others rather than getting into action situations (i.e. he prefers some kind of "staff" position), and that he does not get too close to people or depend too heavily upon them. None of the latter characteristics are inconsistent with the basic structure, but they could not have been specifically predicted from the basic structure. Persons with the same kind of underlying character structure might enter similar interactive situations quite differently. In other words, I am asserting that it is not sufficient to describe a person in terms of basic personality structure, if we are to understand his relationship to organizations. Furthermore, it is possible to analyze the person's functioning at the social self level and this level of analysis is most likely to be productive for the understanding of career patterns and the reciprocal influence process between individual and organization.

Each of us learns to construct somewhat different selves for the different kinds of situations in which we are called on to perform, and for the different kinds of roles we are expected to take. Thus, I am a somewhat different person at work than at home; I present myself somewhat differently to my superior than to my subordinate, to my wife than to my children, to my doctor than to a salesman, when I am at a party than when I am at work, and so on. The long and complex process of socialization teaches us the various norms, rules of conduct, values and attitudes, and desirable role behaviors through which one's obligations in situations and roles can be fulfilled. All of these patterns become part of us so that to a large extent we are not conscious of the almost instantaneous choices we make among possible patterns as we "compose ourselves" for entry into a new social situation. Yet these patterns can be immediately brought to consciousness if the presented self chosen is one which does not fit the situation, that is, fails to get confirmation from others.

Failure to get confirmation of a self which involves a certain claimed value is felt by the actor as a threat to his face; he finds himself in a situation in which he is about to lose face if he and the others do not take action to re-equilibrate the situation (Goffman, 1955). A simple example of this process can be seen if a person presents himself to others as a humorous fellow who can tell a good joke, tries telling a joke which turns out not to be seen as funny, and "recoups" or avoids the loss of face which is threatened by the silence of others by humorously derogating his own joke telling ability, thereby signalling to the others that he is now claiming a different and somewhat less "valuable" (i.e. more humble) self. The others may signal their acceptance of the latter self by various reassurances, but all parties know very well the unmistakeable meaning of the silence following the first joke.

The various selves which we bring to situations and from which we choose as we present ourselves to others, overlap in varying degrees in that many of the attributes possessed by the person are relevant to several of his selves. Thus, emotional sensitivity may be just as relevant when a person is dealing with a customer in a sales relationship as it is with his wife and children in a family relationship. The person's attributes and underlying character structure thus provide some of the common threads which run through the various social selves he constructs, and provide one basis for seeking order and consistency among them.

Another basis for such order and consistency is to be found in the role demands the person faces. That is, with respect to each role which the person takes or to which he aspires, one can distinguish certain central expectations, certain essential attributes which the person must have or certain behaviors he must be willing to engage in, in order to fulfill the role minimally

(pivotal attributes or norms). Other attributes and behaviors are desirable and relevant though not necessary (relevant attributes or norms), while still another set can be identified as irrelevant with respect to the role under analysis, though this other set may define various "latent" role capacities the person may have (peripheral attributes or norms).* The pivotal, relevant, and peripheral attributes of a role will define to some degree the filters which operate at the boundary guarding access to that role.

These changes which occur in a person during the course of his career, as a result of adult socialization or acculturation, are changes in the nature and integration of his social selves. It is highly unlikely that he will change substantially in his basic character structure and his pattern of psychological defenses, but he may change drastically in his social selves in the sense of developing new attitudes and values, new competencies, new images of himself, and new ways of entering and conducting himself in social situations. As he faces new roles which bring new demands, it is from his repertory of attributes and skills that he constructs or reconstructs himself to meet these demands.

A final point concerns the problem of locating what we ordinarily term as the person's beliefs, attitudes, and values at an appropriate level of his total personality. It has been adequately demonstrated (e.g. Adorne et al, 1950; Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956, Katz, 1960) that beliefs, attitudes, and values are intimately related to basic character structure and psychological defenses. But this relationship differs in different people according to the functions which beliefs, attitudes, and values serve for them. Smith et al distinguish three such functions: 1) reality testing - where beliefs and attitudes are used by the person to discover and test the basic reality around him; 2) social adjustment - where beliefs and attitudes are used by the person

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*This analysis is based on the distinction made by Nadel (1957) and utilized in a study of out-patient nurses by Bennis et al (1959).

to enable him to relate comfortably to others, express his membership in groups, and his social selves; and 3) externalization - where beliefs and attitudes are used to express personal conflicts, conscious and unconscious motives, and feelings.

The kind of function which beliefs and attitudes serve for the individual and the kind of flexibility he has in adapting available social selves to varying role demands will define for each individual some of his strengths and weaknesses with respect to organizational demands and the particular pattern of socialization and innovation which one might expect in his career.

For example, a given individual might well have a number of highly labile social selves in which his beliefs and attitudes serve only a social adjustment function. At the same time, he might have one or more other highly stable selves in which he shows great rigidity of belief and attitude. The process of socialization might then involve extensive adaptation and change on the part of the person in his "labile" social selves without touching other more stable parts of him. He might show evidence of having been strongly influenced by the organization, but only in certain areas.* Whether this same person would be capable of innovating during his career would depend on whether his job would at any time call on his more stable social selves. The activation of such stable selves might occur only with promotion, the acquisition of increasing responsibility, or acceptance into a more cental region of the organization.

When we think of organizations infringing on the private lives of their members we think of a more extensive socialization process which involves changes in more stable beliefs and attitudes which are integrated into more stable social selves. Clearly it is possible for such "deeper" influence to

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* For a relevant analysis of areas which the organization is perceived to be entitled to influence see Schein & Ott (1962) and Schein & Lippitt (1965).

occur, but in assessing depth of influence in any given individual-organizational relationship we must be careful not to overlook adaptational patterns which look like deep influence but are only the activation of and changes in relatively more labile social selves.

Some Problems of Measuring Individual Structure

I do not know of any well worked out techniques for studying a person's repertory of social selves, their availability, lability, and associated beliefs and attitudes. Something like rating behavior during role-playing or socio-drama would be a possible method but it is difficult to produce in full force the situational and role demands which elicit from us the social selves with which we play for keeps. Assessment techniques which involve observing the person in actual ongoing situations are more promising but more expensive. It is possible that a well motivated person would find it possible to provide accurate data through self-description, i.e. tell accurately how he behaves in situations that he typically faces.

If observation and interview both are impractical, it may be possible to obtain written self-descriptions or adjective check-list data (where the adjectives are specifically descriptive of interactional or social behavior) in response to hypothetical problem situations which are posed for the individual. The major difficulty with this technique would be that it is highly likely that much of the taking of a social self is an unconscious process which even a well motivated subject could not reconstruct accurately. Hence his data would be limited to his conscious self-perceptions. Such conscious self-perceptions could of course, be supplemented by similar descriptions of the subject made by others.

III. THE STRUCTURE OF THE CAREER

The career can be looked at from a number of points of view. The individual moving through an organization builds certain perspectives having to do with advancement, personal success, nature of the work, and so on (Becker et al, 1961). Those individuals in the organization who take the "organizational" point of view, build perspectives in terms of the development of human resources, allocation of the right people to the right slots, optimum rates of movement through departments and levels, and so on. A third possible perspective which one can take toward the career is that of the outside observer of the whole process, in which case one is struck by certain basic similarities between organizational careers and other transitional processes which occur in society such as socialization, education, the acculturation of immigrants, initiation into groups, etc. If one takes this observer perspective one can describe the structure and process of the career in terms of a set of basic _stages_ which create transitional and terminal _statuses_ or _positions_, and involve certain psychological and organizational processes (see Table I).

In the first column of the Table I have placed the basic stages as well as the key transitional events which characterize movement from one stage to another. The terminology chosen deliberately reflects events in organizations such as schools, religious orders, or fraternities where the stages are well articulated. These same stages and events are assumed to exist and operate in industrial, governmental, and other kinds of organizations even though they are not as clearly defined or labelled. Where a stage does not exist for a given organization, we can ask what the functional equivalent of that stage is. For example, the granting of tenure and the stage of permanent membership is not clearly

Table I

Basic Stages, Positions, and Processes Involved in a Career

Basic Stages and Transitions	Statuses or Positions	Psychological and Organizational Processes: transactions between individual and organization
1. Pre-entry	Aspirant, applicant, rushee	Preparation, education, anticipatory socialization
Entry (trans.)	Entrant, postulant, recruit	Recruitment, rushing, testing, screening, selection, acceptance ("hiring"); passage through external inclusion boundary; rites of entry; induction and orientation
2. Basic training, novitiate	Trainee, novice, pledge	Training, indoctrination, socialization, testing of the man by the organization, tentative acceptance into group
Initiation, first vows (trans.)	Initiate, graduate	Passage through first inner inclusion boundary, acceptance as member and conferring of organizational status, rite of passage and acceptance
3. First regular assignment	New member	First testing by the man of his own capacity to function; granting of real responsibility (playing for keeps); passage through functional boundary with assignment to specific job or department
Sub-stages 3a. Learning the job 3b. Maximum performance 3c. Becoming obsolete 3d. Learning new skills, etc.		Indoctrination and testing of man by immediate work group leading to acceptance or rejection; if accepted further education and socialization (learning the ropes); preparation for higher status through coaching, seeking visibility, finding sponsors, etc.
Promotion or leveling off (trans.)		Preparation, testing, passage through hierarchical boundary, rite of passage; may involve passage through functional boundary as well (rotation)
4. Second assignment	Legitimate member (fully accepted)	Processes under no. 3 repeat
Sub-stages		
5. Granting of tenure	Permanent member	Passage through another inner conclusion boundary
Termination and exit (trans.)	Old timer, senior citizen	Preparation for exit, cooling the mark out, rites of exit (testimonial dinners, etc.)
6. Post-exit	Alumnus emeritus, retired	Granting of peripheral status

identified in American business or industrial concerns, yet there are powerful norms operating in most such organizations to retain employees who have reached a certain level and/or have had a certain number of years of service. These norms lead to personnel policies which on the average guarantee the employee a job and thus function as equivalents to a more formal tenure system.

It should be noted that the kind of stages and terminology chosen also reflects the assumption that career movement is basically a process of learning or socialization (during which organizational influence is at a maximum), followed by a process of performance (during which individual influence on the organization is at a maximum), followed by a process of either becoming obsolete or learning new skills which lead to further movement. These are relatively broad categories which are not fully refined in the table. For example, in the case of becoming obsolete a further set of alternative stages may be provided by the organizational structure--1) retraining for new career; 2) lateral transfer and permanent leveling off with respect to rank, but not necessarily with respect to inclusion; 3) early forced exit (early "retirement"); 4) retention in the given stage in spite of marginal performance (retaining "dead wood" in the organization).

In the second column of the table are found the kinds of terms which we use to characterize the statuses or positions which reflect the different stages of the career. In the third column I have tried to list the kinds of interactional processes which occur between the individual and the organization. These processes can be thought of as reflecting preparation of the incumbent for boundary transition, preparation of the group for his arrival, actual transition processes such as tests, rites of passage, status conferring ceremonies, and post transition processes prior to preparation for new transitions.*

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* See Strauss (1959) for an excellent description of some of these processes.

Basically the dynamics of the career can be thought of as a sequence of boundary passages. The person can move up, around, and in, and every career is some sequence of moves along these three paths. Thus, it is possible to move primarily inward without moving upward or around as in the case of the janitor who has remained a janitor all of his career but, because of association with others who have risen in the hierarchy, enjoys their confidences and a certain amount of power through his opportunities to coach newcomers.

It is also possible to move primarily upward without moving inward or around, as in the case of the scarce highly trained technical specialist who must be elevated in order to be held by the organization but who is given little administrative power or confidential information outside of his immediate area. Such careers are frequently found in universities where certain scholars can become full professors without ever taking the slightest interest in the university as an organization and where they are not seen as being very central to its functioning.

The problem of the professional scientist or engineer in industry hinges precisely on this issue, in that the scientist often feels excluded in spite of "parallel ladders," high salaries, frequent promotions, and fancy titles. Moving in or toward the center of an organization implies increase in power and access to information which enables the person to influence his own destiny. The "parallel ladder" provides rank but often deprives the professional in industry of the kind of power and sense of influence which is associated with centrality.

Finally, movement around without movement in or up is perhaps most clearly exemplified in the perpetual student, or the person who tries some new skill or work area as soon as he has reasonable mastered what he had been doing. Such

circumferential or lateral movement is also a way in which organizations handle those whom they are unwilling to promote or get rid of. Thus, they get transferred from one job to another, often with the polite fiction that the transfers constitute promotions of a sort.

In most cases, the career will be some combination of movement in all three dimensions--the person will have been moved up, will have had experience in several departments, and will have moved into a more central position in the organization. Whether any given final position results from smooth or even movement or represents a zig-zagging course is another aspect to consider. Because sub-cultures always tend to exist within a large organization, one may assume that any promotion or transfer results in some temporary loss of centrality, in that the person will not immediately be accepted by the new group into which he has been moved. In fact, one of the critical skills of getting ahead may be the person's capacity to regain a central position in any new group into which he is placed.* In the military service, whether a person is ultimately accepted as a good leader or not may depend upon his capacity to take a known difficult assignment in which he temporarily loses acceptance and centrality and to succeed in spite of this in gaining high productivity and allegiance from the men.

The attempt to describe the career in terms of sequential steps or stages introduces some possible distortions. For example, various of the stages may be collapsed in certain situations into a single major event. A young man may report for work and be given as his first assignment a highly responsible job, may be expected to learn as he actually performs, and is indoctrinated by his experiences at the same time that he is using them as a test of his self. The whole assignment may serve the function of an elaborate initiation rite during

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*In a fascinating experiment with children, Merei, 1941, showed that a strong group could resist the impact of a strong leader child and force the leader child to conform to group norms, but that the skillful leader child first accepted the norms, gained acceptance and centrality, and then began to influence the group toward his own goals.

which the organization tests the man as well. The stages outlined in the chart all occur in one way or another, but they may occur simultaneously and thus be difficult to differentiate.

Another distortion is the implication in the chart that boundaries are crossed in certain set sequences. In reality it may be the case that the person enters a given department on a provisional basis before he has achieved any basic acceptance by the organization so that the functional boundary passage precedes inclusion boundary passage. On the other hand, it may be more appropriate to think of the person as being located in a kind of organizational limbo during his basic training, an image which certainly fits well those training programs which rotate the trainee through all of the departments of the organization without allowing him to do any real work in any of them.

A further complexity arises from the fact that each department, echelon, and power clique is a sub-organization with a subculture which superimposes on the major career pattern a set of, in effect, subcareers within each of the sub-organizations. The socialization which occurs in sub-units creates difficulties or opportunities for the person to the degree that the sub-culture is well integrated with the larger organizational culture. If conflicts exist, the person must make a complex analysis of the major organizational boundaries to attempt to discover whether subsequent passage through a hierarchical boundary (promotion) for example, is more closely tied to acceptance or rejection of sub-cultural norms (i.e. does the filter operate more in terms of the person's capacity to show loyalty even in the face of frustration or in terms of disloyalty for the sake of larger organizational goals even though this entails larger personal risks?)

IV. IMPLICATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Thus far I have tried to develop a set of concepts and a kind of model of the organization, the individual, and the career. The kinds of concepts chosen were intended to be useful in identifying the interactions between the individual and the organization as he pursues his career within the organization. We need concepts of this sort to make it possible to compare organizations with respect to the kinds of career paths they generate, and to make it possible to describe the vicissitudes of the career itself. Perhaps the most important function of the concepts, however, is to provide an analytical frame of reference which will make it possible to generate some hypotheses about the crucial process of organizational influences on the individual (socialization) and individual influences on the organization (innovation). Using the concepts defined above, I would now like to try to state some hypotheses as a first step toward building a genuinely socio-psychological theory of career development.

Hypothesis 1. Organizational _socialization_ will occur primarily in connection with the passage through hierarchical and inclusion boundaries; efforts at _education_ and _training_ will occur primarily in connection with the passage through functional boundaries. In both instances, the amount of effort at socialization and/or training will be at a maximum just prior to boundary passage, but will continue for some time after boundary passage.

The underlying assumption behind this hypothesis is that 1) the organization is most concerned about correct values and attitudes at the point where it is granting a member more authority and/or centrality, and 2) the individual is most vulnerable to socialization pressures just before and after boundary passage. He is vulnerable before because of the likelihood that he is anxious to move up or in and is therefore motivated to learn organizational norms and values; he

is vulnerable after boundary passage because of the new role demands and his needs ✓ to reciprocate with correct attitudes and values for having been passed. It is a commonly observed organizational fact that a griping employee often becomes a devoted, loyal follower once he has been promoted and acquired responsibility for the socialization of other employees.[*]

Hypothesis 2. *Innovation*, or the individual's influence on the organization, will occur *in the middle* of a given stage of the career, at a maximum distance from boundary passage.

The person must be far enough from the earlier boundary passage to have learned the requirements of the new position and to have earned centrality in the new sub-culture, yet must be far enough from his next boundary passage to be fully involved in the present job without being concerned about preparing himself for the future. Also, his power to induce change is lower if he is perceived as about to leave (the lame duck phenomenon). Attempts to innovate closer to boundary passage either will meet resistance or will produce only temporary change.

Hypothesis 3. In general, the process of socialization will be more ✓ prevalent in the early stages of a career and the process of innovation late in the career, *but both processes occur at all stages*.

Figure 2 attempts to diagram the relationships discussed above. The boundaries that are most relevant to these influence processes are the hierarchical ones in that the power of the organization to socialize is most intimately tied to the status rewards it can offer. One cannot ignore, however, the crucial role which inclusion boundaries and centrality may play in affecting the amount of socialization or innovation. If it is a correct assumption that

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[*] See also Lieberman (1956) for an excellent research study demonstrating attitude change after promotion.

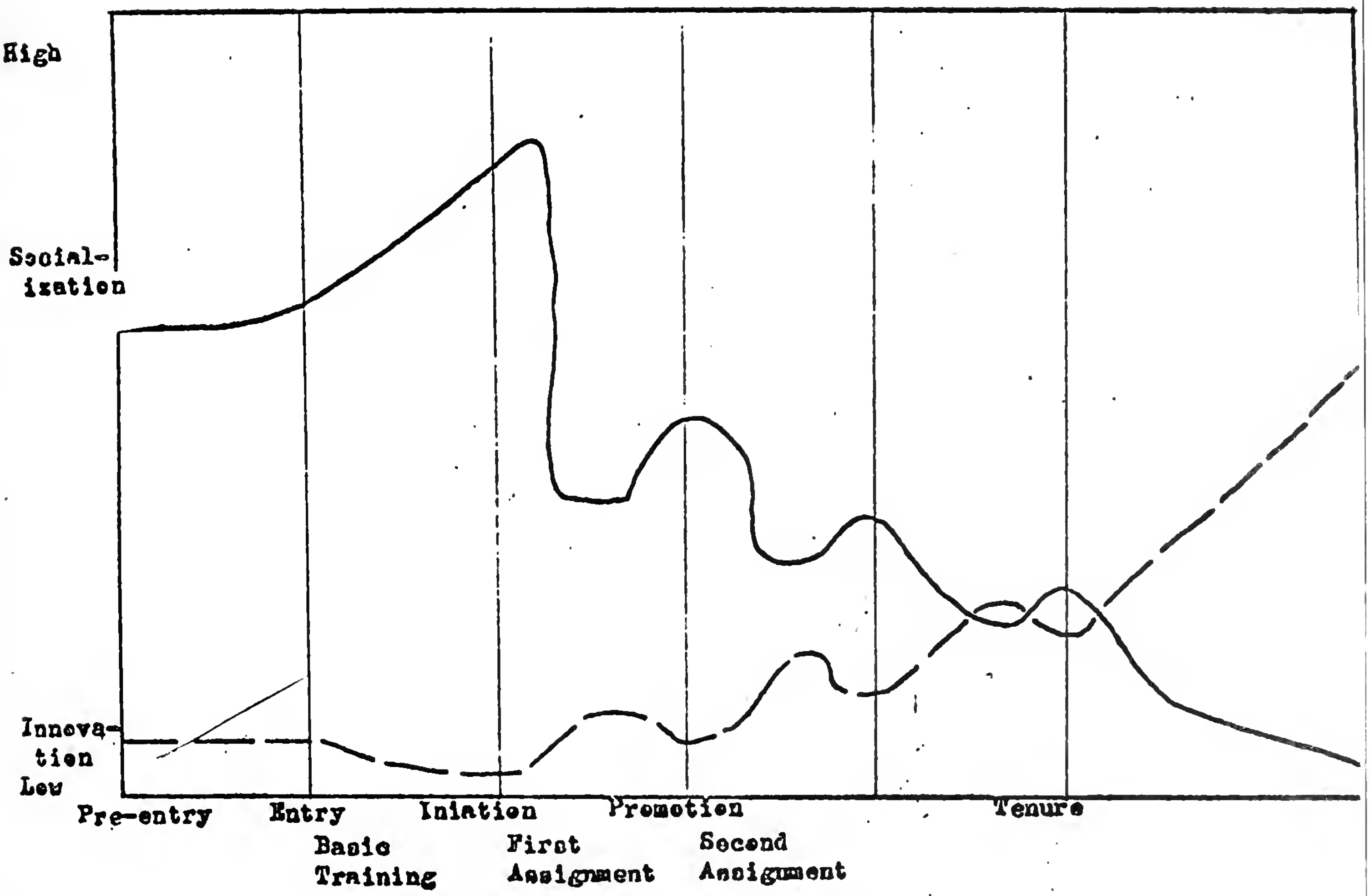

Figure 2. Socialization and Innovation During the Stages of the Career

genuinely creative innovative behavior can occur only when the person is reasonably secure in his position, this is tantamount to saying that he has to have a certain amount of acceptance and centrality to innovate. On the other hand, if the acceptance and centrality involves a sub-culture which is itself hostile to certain organizational goals, it becomes more difficult for the person to innovate (except in reference to sub-cultural norms). This is the case of the men in the production shop with fancy rigs and working routines which permit them to get the job done faster and more comfortably (thus innovating in the service of sub-group norms), yet which are guarded from management eyes and used only to make life easier for the men themselves. One thing which keeps these processes from being shared is the sub-group pressure on the individual and his knowledge that his acceptance by the sub-group hinges on his adherence to its norms. Innovation by individuals will always occur to some degree, but it does not necessarily lead to any new ideas or processes which are functional for the total organization.

Whether or not organizational innovation occurs, then becomes more a function of the degree to which sub-group norms are integrated with the norms and goals of the total organization. In complex organizations there are many forces acting which tend to make groups defensive and competitive, thus increasing the likelihood of their developing conflicting norms (Schein, 1965). Where this happens the process of innovation can still be stimulated through something akin to the "heroic cycle" by which societies revitalize themselves. Campbell shows how the myth of the hero in many cultures is essentially similar (Campbell, 1956). Some respected member of the total organization or society is sent away (freed from the sub-group norms) to find a magic gift which he must bring back to revitalize the organization. By temporarily stepping outside the organization

the person can bring back new ideas and methods without directly violating subgroup norms and thus protect his own position as well as the face of the other group members.

Hypothesis 4. Socialization or influence will involve primarily the more labile social selves of the individual, while innovation will involve primarily the more stable social selves of the individual, provided the individual is not held captive in the organization.

I am assuming that if socialization forces encounter a stable part of the person which he is unable or unwilling to change, he will leave the organization if he can. On the other hand, if a given way of operating which flows from a stable portion of the individual is incompatible with other organizational procedures or norms, i.e. if innovation is impossible, the individual will also leave. The only condition under which neither of these statements would hold is the condition in which the individual is physically or psychologically unable to leave.

Hypothesis 5. A change in the more stable social selves as a result of socialization will occur only under conditions of coercive persuasion, i.e. where the individual cannot or does not psychologically feel free to leave the organization.

Conditions under which coercive persuasion would operate can be produced by a variety of factors: a tight labor market in which movement to other organizations is constrained; an employment contract which involves a legal or moral obligation to remain with the organization; a reward system which subtly but firmly entraps the individual through stock options, pension plans, deferred compensation plans and the like.

If conditions such as those mentioned above do operate to entrap the individual and, if he in turn begins to conform to organizational norms even in terms of the more stable parts of his self, he will indeed become unable to innovate. It is this pattern which has been identified by Merton as operating in bureaucratic frameworks and which writers like W. H. Whyte have decried with the label of "organizational man." It should be noted, however, that this pattern occurs only under certain conditions; it should not be confused with normal processes of socialization, those involving the more labile parts of the person's self and the more pivotal role requirements or norms of the organization.

An important corrolary of this hypothesis is that if organizations wish to insure a high rate of innovation, they must also insure highly permeable external boundaries, i.e. must insure that employees feel free to leave the organization. The less permeable the exit boundary, the greater the pressures for total conformity.

Summary

In this paper I have tried to present a set of concepts about the nature of the organization, the nature of the individual, and the nature of the career--the set of events which tie the individual and the organization together. My purpose has been to provide a frame of reference and a set of concepts which would make it possible to think in more empirical terms about a variable like "career," yet which would relate this variable both to organizational and psychological variables. Using concepts such as "organizational boundaries," labile and stable "social selves," career stages and transitional processes, I have tried to identify some hypotheses about organizational influences on the individual (socialization) and individual influences on the organization (innovation).

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